

Remarks

Applicants respectfully offer the amendments described above in response to the Examiner's comment, made during the telephonic interview on January 28, 2003, that more structural limitations need to be clearly recited in the claims in order to remove the rejection by the prior art made of record in this matter—specifically Thebaud, United States Patent Number 4,322,109.

First, Applicants have replaced all references to the words "furniture piece" with the word "bench."

Second, Applicants have added the words "substantially planar" to describe the functional surface of the bench formed by the plurality of rib units.

Third, Applicants have added language to describe the fact that the support member of each rib unit emanates consistently from one side of the bench.

Applicants believe that, as amended, the claims now contain the necessary structural limitations and are ready for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,
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Marked up Version in the Claims

1. (Three Amended) A bench furniture piece, which comprises:

a plurality of rib units, each of which has (i) at least one functional surface such that a composite of each of the at least one functional surface of the plurality of rib units defines a substantially planar functional surface of said bench furniture piece, and (ii) a single supporting member configured according to a pattern which varies from one rib unit to another such that a composite of the supporting members provides support for said bench furniture piece and its load wherein ~~each rib has a front and a rear, and each~~ said support member ~~is~~ of each rib emanates consistently among the rib units from either a front or rear portion thereof of said bench;

interconnecting means for securing each of the rib units to the others; and

spacer means for situating each of the rib units in a position which, when secured by the interconnecting means, is separated from each of the adjoining rib units.

13. (Twice Amended) A bench furniture piece comprising:

a plurality of interconnected rib units, each further comprising:

a first functional member defining a substantially planar, first functional surface for performing a first composite function for said bench furniture piece;

a supporting member emanating consistently from one side of the bench ~~either a front or rear prtion of each rib unit~~;

wherein each supporting member of each rib unit is angularly displaced

from its corresponding first functional member, independently of the remaining support members of said plurality of rib units; and

wherein said plurality of rib units are interconnected such that the independently angled support members define a pattern such that the composite of the supporting members provides support for said bench furniture piece and its potential occupants.

16. (Twice Amended) A bench furniture piece comprising:

a plurality of interconnected rib units, each comprising:

a functional surface such that a composite of the functional surface of each of said plurality of rib units defines a substantially planar functional surface of said bench furniture piece; and

a supporting member emanating consistently from either a front or a rear portion of said bench each rib unit; and

wherein each said supporting member is configured according to a pattern, with respect to adjacent supporting members, to define a composite supporting member which provides support for said bench furniture piece and its potential occupants.